

The following story appeared in the [Daily Herald](#) on February 18,2010.

The University of Illinois at Chicago and the Better Government Association teamed today to release a report on the "pervasive pattern of corruption" in Cook County over the last four decades and calling for a series of reforms.

The 30-page report, prepared by the UIC's Department of Political Science and the BGA, documents 146 convictions on government corruption going back to 1970 and sets a series of reform measures to end the same practices in the present day.

"This is not intended to be breaking news," said BGA Executive Director Andy Shaw in presenting the report at the Cook County Building in downtown Chicago. "This is historical in nature, but it's also relevant today. It is not directed at any one public official. We're not standing in front of Todd Stroger's office because we're blaming Stroger for four decades. He's just the latest in a long line of county officials who weren't minding the store properly or well enough."

"Cook County has become Crook County," said UIC Professor Dick Simpson, formerly a reform-minded alderman in Chicago's city council. "The pervasive pattern of corruption must be changed."

The report went back to judicial convictions in the Operation Greylord federal undercover operation and corruption in the Cook County Sheriff's Office under James O'Grady and James Dvorak in the '80s and beyond. But it also cited more recent offenses, such as the scandal over President Stroger's hiring of Tony Cole or the "looting" of the President's Office of Employment Training, as well as Circuit Court Clerk Dorothy Brown's cash-contribution "Jeans Days" and gifts and campaign contributions accepted from her underlings.

Stroger spokesman Chris Geovanis issued a statement insisting the president "has sponsored sweeping reforms" and pointing out, "No indictment related to any actions of this administration has occurred during President Stroger's term."

Simpson called for eight specific reforms:

- Cap campaign contributions from all sources at \$1,500.
- Ban contributions by county employees to their elected bosses and ban gifts to supervisors.

- Ban county officials from lobbying on behalf of other governments and other governmentofficials from lobbying for the county.

- Further limit nepotism.

- Require a forensic audit of the county at all levels.

- Put all contract information online.

- Require accountability and transparency from the county's inspector general.

- Make permanent the independent board overseeing the Health and Hospitals System.

"The greatest cost of corruption is the loss of trust," said Chicago Democratic U.S. Rep. Mike Quigley, formerly a county commissioner. "It is very difficult to govern ... when you don't have the public's trust. That is what we must seek to restore. We owe it to the public. ... It's not just costing us money. It's costing us the critical ability to lead in a democracy."

Simpson and Shaw both trumpeted support for the report from all three candidates for Cook County Board president - Republican Roger Keats, Tom Tresser of the Green Party and Democrat Toni Preckwinkle, who defeated Stroger in the primary earlier this month - with Shaw calling it "a perfect-storm moment for reform" across the state.

"People are madder and more cynical and more frustrated than ever before," Shaw said. "There is an army of people out there who are demanding change, demanding reform."

"For those who cynically say you can't change things, I would suggest that recent elections show otherwise," Quigley said. "It is a combination of what elected officials do and what we do at the ballot box."

"President Stroger and his administration welcome constructive input," Geovanis said, "not publicity stunts staged on behalf of candidates running for Cook County Board president."

Simpson and Shaw went on to present copies of the report to Stroger and the 17 county commissioners. Shaw said the BGA is preparing a series of similar reports focusing on Chicago, its police department and the board of education, with the BGA taking part in some of those studies.